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ABSTRACT

First-hand experiences in learning art are very important. In Hong Kong secondary art, teachers must follow the syllabus and examination schedule suggested by the Education Department. Thus, these teachers cannot undertake art projects because they are locked into the structure of the syllabus and the limits of the timetable. This paper investigates two artist-in-residence projects implemented in Hong Kong. One project is an artist based in a secondary school and the other is an artist based in the studio. The paper finds that the students had greater exposure to various artforms and developed new ideas to make their work more creative. The art teachers participated in different activities and gained new ideas and stimulation for teaching. The paper concludes that, through their participation in teaching and exhibitions, the artists made successful contributions to schools and the community. (Author/BT)

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Visualizing Change in Art Education: Artists in Residence in Hong Kong Schools

Abstract

First hand experiences in learning art are very important. In this paper, I investigate two artist-in-residence projects implemented in Hong Kong. One project is an artist based in a Secondary school and the other is an artist based in the studio. I found that the students had greater exposure to various artforms and developed new ideas to make their work more creative. The art teachers participated in different activities and gained new ideas and stimulation for teaching. Through the participation in teaching and exhibitions, the artists made successful contributions to schools and the community.

Introduction

In 1997, Hong Kong was returned to the Chinese Government after being a British Colony. This began a new era for Hong Kong, and people here face many changes. Traditionally, art education was not important enough to achieve a status equal to that of the academic areas of Chinese, English and Mathematics. The reason, I believe, is that we emphasize doing rather than thinking. In the 1990s, the policies of education emphasized the training of the students as independent citizens in society. In the movement towards critical thinking, teachers of art education should develop a similar pace of change, students should learn to find meaning in art through their own thinking and not passively receive content given by the teachers or found in books. Neill (1994) points out that first-hand experience of art is essential to aesthetic appreciation and meaningful connection (p.155). In line with Neill (1994) argument, I believe that in order to introduce a critical awareness of art, students participating in a first hand experience of observing an artist at work could achieve a powerful reaction.

In traditional schools, teachers use slides and photographic reproductions to introduce artworks. Students learn from the textbooks, and listen to lectures, in which the explanations of works are interpreted by other people. This can be called second-hand experience. It means the students haven't any opportunities to learn how to emphasize with the creator of the piece of art. They also have less opportunity to understand the factors influencing the artists, such as their biographies, personal psychology, social background, cultural history and philosophical history. By having artists in residence, these factors can be shared between the artists and the students either in class or during informal interaction after class. The value of first-hand experience is that students have more opportunities to recognize and value originality. When students are confronted with real art works in process they experience, directly, the reality of the work in terms of scale, color, surface quality and texture. With the real work in front of them, together with the direct experience of observing how the work is constructed, the Artists-in-Residence is in a very advantageous position to teach and share with students these elements and their deeper meanings. These elements are not so apparent in reproductions

and photographs. In first-hand experience, students have the opportunity to be in contact with real artworks and artists.

Museums can provide opportunities for the students to see real masterpieces to enhance the students' taste and appreciation in art. The other way is to contact the real artists. Burgess (1995) makes an important point. She says that an artist-in-residence program can benefit three kinds of people: artists, teachers and students. The purposes are to give students an insight into the artists' creative process at work; to encourage teachers to take a broader, humanistic view of education; and to place the artist in the school and the society.

In this paper, I will introduce the development of an artist-in-residence program in Hong Kong. Two examples will be described to illustrate how the projects that have been implemented in Hong Kong are beneficial to three groups of people: students, teachers and artists.

Background of the Artist-in Residence in Hong Kong Context

The Artist-in-residence scheme was introduced in Hong Kong in 1995. The Hong Kong Government's Arts Policy Review Report (1993) highlighted the need for more encouragement and support for the visual arts, especially within the school curriculum. The artist-in-residence scheme aims to put the artists into schools and to develop young people's artistic vision to enable them to be artistically informed individuals, capable of leading fuller lives through aesthetic experience. This is a primary aim of art education. In 1995, the British Council launched an Artist-in-Education Pilot Scheme with funding from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Seven schools participated in the scheme: two primary and five secondary schools. In 1996, the Artist-in-Residence Programme was organized by the Urban Council with the aim to stimulate public interest in art and encourage the sharing of expertise and experience among local artists. Twenty-two local artists were selected. The studios and facilities were provided by the Hong Kong Urban Arts Centre. In May, 1997, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council and the Education Department organized the first Artist-in-Schools program. The aim was to assist schools to implement the concept of 'One Art for Life' through the organization of arts education programs for students in secondary schools in the 1997-98 academic year. We can see that since 1995, Artist-in-residence projects are becoming more fully developed in Hong Kong.

Research Methodology

In 1995-6, I studied all the seven projects of an Artist-in-Education Pilot Scheme that launched by British Council. In this paper, I chose one project that implemented in school and the other was in the studio. In the whole year, I concerned with the impact of the process, so I mainly used the qualitative research approach. I tried to find out how the artist-in-residence projects could benefit students,

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teachers and artists. Reliability and validity of the research are very important, so it must be based on fact and evidence. In this study, I chose Methodological Triangulation, that was to use different methods on the same object of study. The combination of academic criteria (record cards, display of class work) and non-academic factors (attitudes of studies, teachers, artists and school heads, interview data, questionnaires and observation) were used to make the research more comprehensive. During observation, I sat at the back of the class and kept a detailed record of events to provide a relatively incontestable description for further analysis. I believed interview could provide an opportunity for in-depth probing. I talked to the students, teachers, artists and head teachers. During the interview, I chose the written record to collect data and avoided the use of tape-recorders and video-recorders so that interviewees were able to express their feelings freely. The artists' publications were very useful to me when I discussed with their artworks. The main constraint of the data collecting is influenced by the amount of time available. In the first case, I was not possible to stay in the school for eleven weeks from the beginning to the end. In the second case, the data I obtained was from the participants who are interested in the activity. During the interviews, I did not use tape-recorder and video-recorder, and perhaps I missed some information in my written notes. Also, the big limitation of this study was all these projects were in a pilot scheme. There were not so many schools involved. Therefore, the result of these cases was particular rather than general. Perhaps, uniqueness was the value of the case study.

Project 1: Drawing and Watercolor Painting

(An artist based in a Secondary School)

This project was one of five based in secondary schools, and launched by the British Council in 1995. At the beginning of the project, the artists met with the art teachers who participated in the Artist-in-Education Pilot Scheme. The teachers and artists selected the schools they wish to work with. Mr. Ho is a well-known painter and his artworks are exhibited all over the world. He chose the John F. Kennedy Centre as the school in which to do his residency, from Primary 5-Form 1, ages 11-15. The John F. Kennedy Centre was a special school for physically handicapped students. The reason he chose this school was because he is a disabled artist himself and he wanted to nourish a meaningful life for those students through this project. Mr. Chu, the art teacher in this school, was a sculptor. He told me that he lacked techniques in drawing and painting, therefore, he chose Mr. Ho as the artist in his school, so that he could also learn more from him. I believe that this was a good beginning which went half way towards the success of the project. In the artist-in-residence project, it is very important for the artist and the teacher to understand each other and know what they need at the beginning.

Background of the artist

Mr. Kong Ho had the same physical and psychological problems as the students in the Kennedy Centre.

Through his hard work and talent he graduated from Texas Technology. University with an MFA degree. Besides being an art instructor in the University of Hong Kong, he was active as a productive artist who regularly exhibited his work. He had received several awards for his paintings, drawings and prints, including the Liquitex Excellence in Art University Award. He overcame his physical problems, and this success could give great encouragement to the students. The chosen themes of his paintings were the relationships between nature, geometric forms and multi-cultural symbolism, such as the Taoist view of the "in-between state". This is the Taoist state of "it was and it was not." The principal characteristic of the Tao was the cyclic nature of its ceaseless change. Other topics, included for example, the elegance of a starfish which the artist said was often overlooked because of its "commonality." Through the artist's philosophy, he encouraged the students to find beauty in the environment, such as leaves, sea shells, etc. Through observation, he encouraged the students to look deeper, to explore and discover the real spirit in nature and express their feelings through marks and colors in their paintings. With reference to his painting, "Blue Diadem & Owl Skull," he said,

> "I have chosen to work with the didactic images of creatures that fly, such as butterflies and birds, and earth bound animals like cattle and other livestock, because I enjoy the tension that arises out of comparing the obvious differences between these two separate groups of creatures. Apart from their physical differences, I am also intrigued by the symbolic implications, and mythological roots of butterflies, birds and bovines. Butterflies have held symbolic significance for humankind throughout all of recorded history. Although the symbolic meaning of the butterfly varies from culture to culture, the transformative nature of butterflies makes it an appealing subject for resurrection myths. Personally, I am drawn to butterflies for two reasons. First, I see butterflies as a symbol for the unconquerable human spirit that periodically outgrows and sheds its old self so that a new and transformed fresh self may emerge. I also see butterflies for what they are - beautiful shimmering creatures that are a delight to the senses as they float and flutter effortlessly among the flowers. " (Kong Ho, 1996, p.15)

Description of the Project

The project lasted for three months and included lectures, slide and video presentations of various Masters' artworks, open class discussion, demonstration, inside and outside class sketching exercises and gallery visits. The approaches were varied and concentrated on the school environment because of the traveling problems of handicapped students. The project was well planned, step by step. Although the aesthetic rules and rendering techniques were secondary to initiative and individuality, a good background in fundamental visual communication concepts and techniques offered the students' greater means for expression and more opportunities for discovering inspiration. Therefore, the schedules that the artist planned, allowed for plenty of time to practice.

'Life interchange' was the major goal of this project. Through the different activities, the artist used his experience to teach the students. It brought the students into fruitful contact with a professional artist in the social and cultural context. Students were also able to see the artist's paintings first hand and to experience the real quality of the work. Although the theme based on the philosophy of Taoism is very

difficult to understand, the artist used simple ways to explain it. For example, the artist said, "You lose something, perhaps you could gain more." The ideas came from the handicapped experience and given that the students also had some forms of physical problems, they were more able to relate to the artist's feelings. One example of a lesson involved the artist showing the marks of his artwork "Bird Skeleton & Its Beak " to the students. He told the students that when he stayed in the hospital, he made a mark every day, counting days. The days were so difficult for him because he was so eager to go home. From this example, the students understood that they could use their daily life as a source to develop their ideas in painting.

The artist used different activities to motivate the students to appraise the paintings. He taught the students to look at each thing very carefully, such as a stone, a leaf, etc. The students felt very excited when they discovered the beautiful color and the texture. One of the activities of this project was to display the students' artworks in the Ocean Terminal. It was a wonderful opportunity for these students to show their products to the public. Also, visiting the exhibitions, and participating in more seminars and workshops heightened students' sensibilities and perceptions. I believe new ideas or insights were obtained from looking at everyday things from different perspectives and stand points.

This was a special school. The art teacher himself was an enthusiastic teacher. He gave great care to the students in his teaching but I think it was not enough because the teacher could not stimulate the students. The art teacher told me that some of the students were very lazy. In normal art lessons, they did not finish their work and often went to sleep in the class. The teacher could not interest them, so he let them sleep during the lesson. The artist used another teaching method. He urged the students to finish their work completely in the class before they left the classroom. He told the students that working hard and finishing the work were the students' responsibilities. The pressure that the artist asserted was far greater than that of the class teacher. In this case, I discovered that the artist could do something that the art teacher could not do, for example, convey the attitude of being a successful artist. After the project, the teacher had gained confidence through observing the different activities.

In ordinary schools*, the teacher usually uses instruction method to tell the students what the artwork means. In this project, the artist used his work to motivate the students to think and discuss. He used questions such as, "You see the moon in my picture, can you see the meaning?" "I put white lines on the picture, does it look better or worse?" The discussion helped the students to think more deeply about the picture. It is more convincing to tell the students what the role of an artist is if you are an artist yourself. The students could ask the artist everything directly. From the lectures, Mr. Ho told the students about his background, the reasons he chose painting as his career, and also, the difficulties that the disabled artist would face. The students could empathize with him and also appreciate his role as artist more fully.

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"Creating is from daily life," Mr. Ho said. So, most of his work is from daily life. In this project, the artist worked with the students for three months. Each student has his own background and feelings. These are precious and unique experiences to the artist when he creates his work because the experiences are real. When I read the evaluation form written by the students at the end of the project, I saw one student's writing, "Although Mr. Ho is very serious, I like him, because I learn a lot from him." The students appreciated the artist's work through his talent, his enthusiasm and his hard work. I believe that the artist gained a real sense of value and appreciation from his students on this project.

In conclusion, this was the artist's reflection on the project. He said, "Artists with artistic excellence, inspiring personalities, higher educational experience, and commitment to the aims of this scheme were sought to communicate their enthusiasm and skill to students and teachers with whom they worked together for three months. Through this three-way interaction, the projects share the common objective of benefitting the students, the art teachers and the artists, alike. These projects broaden the students and art teachers' outlooks on art, artists, and the role of art in daily life. They also develop the students' abilities of self-expression and creativity." I am sure this project provided first-hand experience for the students and enabled them to develop their own confidence and skills.

Project 2: Marvelous Color - Raku Ceramics

(An artist based lesson in the Studio)

A project called Marvelous Color - Raku Ceramics, provides another example of the artist-in-residence approach. In this case, the artist worked in her studio and not in school. The total working space of studio was about 3,000 sq. ft. including 1,500 sq. ft. of open terrace. Compare with the classroom in the school, the space was bigger. More facilities could be used, such as Raku Kiln and variety of glazes. This activity lasted for three months, the students could work in the studio freely whenever they liked. Therefore, the teaching method was more child-centred. This project had six parts; a raku kiln construction workshop, a special Feng Shui ceremony performance; raku art demonstrations; workshops; an open informal critique of raku pottery and the raku ceramics exhibition.

Background of the Artist

The project was conducted by an experienced ceramist, Ms. Martie Geiger-Ho who came from the United States. She has taught in a secondary school in Hong Kong. Ms. Martie was enthusiastic about promoting raku pottery. She shared her expertise with art teachers and students, and she hoped that raku pottery activities could be expanded in every school because she believed that pottery would allow the students to more fully engage in the activity of ceramic making including learning about the social importance placed on the production and use of vessels. Her artforms include functional and sculptural

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aspects. One of her raku art-works, "Raku Calligraphy", was drawn from the idea of the Chinese scrolls. The fluid nature of the thick black brushed patterns around the shoulder of the vessel are seen as free calligraphic lines. In another artwork, "Rite of Transformation: Gorgon Medusa as a Kiln Goddness", she uses Kiln Guardians as the theme to tell a myth about the cycle of life and the role of the Great Mother. Gorgon Medusa, once a beautiful Greek Goddness, had an affair with the God Poseidon and bore him two children. But she offended the Goddess Athena, who changed Medusa's hair into snakes and gave her a glance that could instantly transform human flesh into stone. The upraised horn-like arms of the Goddess represents her unlimited power and enduring strength. Drawn from a myrid of historical and multi-cultural overlays, the symbol of the serpent appears to evoke memories of protective archaic feminine snake cult figures. At Delphi, serpents were kept in the caves of Trophonius for prophetic purposes (Martie Geiger-Ho, 1998).

Description of the Project

The programme was systematic, including different aspects and activities, from conceptual learning to the finished product exhibition. Firstly, the raku kiln construction event gave us fresh ideas. The methods and equipment she taught us were easy to implement in secondary schools. The slide lectures gave the participants a clear theoretical knowledge, such as the growth of the Japanese tea ceremony and Zen Buddhist philosophy. The raku workshops enabled everyone to learn the techniques, including how to create the form of the pots, the mixture of glazes, and the loading of the kilns. The session of open informal critique was held on one of the evenings. Lastly, the raku ceramics exhibition provided the viewers with the chance to appreciate different Hong Kong potter's artwork.

The project took place in the artist's studio, one advantage of the artist working in the studio is that the work can be seen first hand. Also, he/she can provide the actual working place and the special equipment that the schools cannot offer. The working atmosphere and the setting enabled the students to gain a deeper understanding of the working processes and attitude of the individual artist. In schools, the workload of the art teachers is very heavy, they don't have time and space to create their art works during the lessons.

The history of Japan's tea ceremony and the Feng Shui performance gave opportunities for the participants to understand the traditional customs in Eastern culture. At the Feng Shui performance, the artist, Ms. Martie Geiger-Ho told us, "since modern raku is a synthesis of both Western and Eastern philosophies and techniques, it seems only natural that when planning a suitable and personally compatible kiln site in Hong Kong, that the ancient Chinese art of 'feng shui' should be put into practice. In China, feng shui helps people to direct positive energy into their lives." The ceremonies included a 'christening' kiln firing for the new kiln, story telling, and a ritual burning of ceramic wishes from participants. These activities increased the students' knowledge and understanding of the art and the

artist's involvement as this was presented as an integral part of the project design.

Through the raku pottery art history lectures, we could discover the external clues about the work and the artist who created it. During this process, we learned as much as we could. This would help us to find the internal clues and make additional decisions about the work. The knowledge about the history behind a piece of artwork is important for developing and appreciation of it. Consequently, art history is necessary and essential for the development of skills for art criticism. Also, the artist demonstrated the process of how she created a pot as well as her real artwork. The students had the opportunity to ask, to discuss and express their opinions and their judgments of the artist's work. The students were able draw conclusions about the meaning of artworks in different times and culture through discussion.

The students shared great interest in the practical work because they seldom have opportunities to learn raku pottery art in the ordinary schools, for safety reasons. The activity of firing the pots was exciting. This new firing technique was very stimulating to the students. They worked actively. They learned how to put the pots in the kiln, they waited throughout the firing patiently and were able to take out their pots at the right time. The students were excited to be involved when they looked at the firing pots in the kiln and took them out by themselves.

In this project, the artist gave the opportunity for the students and teachers to understand how the potters constructed the different shapes of kilns in different countries for their special needs. As Addiss (1993) states, "Art-historical styles are identified in order to describe similarities and differences. Art-historical accounts attempt to explain why these differences and similarities occurred " (p.120). Through the discussions, the participants learned how to design a kiln for Hong Kong schools, according to their special requirements. The teachers understood that it was not difficult to build a kiln in their school. During this project, the artist published a booklet introducing the procedure to construct a kiln, and where to buy the materials in Hong Kong. The teachers gained much confidence in teaching raku art through this activity.

In this project, I discovered that the artist gave far more than she could receive. The reason was the students stayed in the studio only for a short time. With so many participants, the artist was very anxious to explain every point many times. I think it is better for the students to work in the studio for at least three months. The reason is that that way they have more time to work with the artist. All their working materials and equipment are at hand. The artist is on her own territory and more in control. Through explaining the process to the students, the artist had to reassess her own work carefully.

As Piepenbury (1972) argues "The potter is like the clay, he is formed by development and evolution."

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(p.10) I strongly agree with him. In this short period of the project, we could not expect the participants to become great potters. The valuable part of this project was to let everyone explore the magic of raku and to recognize the qualities we value in the pots. In this project, I believe the artist fully shared her enthusiasm and skills in every activity.

From the raku project that the artist offered, the participants indicated that the experience helped them to understand that the pots reflected our vision and spirit, and this was the philosophy of living. Just as the famous potter, David Leach wrote in the forward of the book, "Raku, a Review of Contemporary Work" (1994), "It is a gamble that appeals to emotions more than to rational intellect, and teaches us what to recognize as 'life' in a pot..." (p.7). Pottery is not created by the hands alone but by the entire body and being. When the project was finished, I could clearly see that through the contribution of the artist, through the assistance of the teachers, and through the hard work of the students, the artist-in-residence programme was successfully and meaningfully implemented in the art curriculum. Everyone benefited a great deal from the experience, gaining insight and confidence in their skills and abilities.

Conclusion

In Hong Kong, although some of the secondary art teachers are also art professionals, they cannot undertake art projects freely because they are locked into the structure of the school timetable. The teaching schedule has to follow the syllabus and examination structure suggested by the Education Department. The situation in primary schools is not satisfactory, for instance, over 70% of the art teachers are untrained in teaching art. Therefore, the artist-in-residence can make a valuable contribution. To enrich the students' experience in different areas of art learning, the professional artist can fulfill a staff development role. Through sharing the experience and proven expertise with the artists, teachers could learn more about the subject. Eisner suggests that "Artists are presumably able to do what art teachers are not competent to do." (Taylor, 1986, p.6). First hand experience of art works enables students to value originality. It is precious to let the students experience the artists' artworks, their creative process and even their work place. Through contact with artists, students could realize that people's lives are enriched by exposure to and experience with the arts. Usually, artists neglect or have no opportunities to develop the links between the school and the community. The artists resident in the schools function as a bridge to communicate between the schools and society. When artists work in schools, the collaboration is not only between students, artists and teachers. The other function is communication with the outside community. These activities could provide valuable insight into the nature of various cultures and the artwork they produce, as well as to promote the images of the artists to the society.

Art must not become a lifeless, mechanistic and dry academic study. Although there is no empirical

evidence to suggest that students did not learn about art from the traditional method, putting live artists into schools help make art education more interesting and hence more valuable, as supported by data from this study. Therefore, the artist-in-residence programme broadens students' insights of others' work and provides professional art knowledge for teachers. The artist can find delight, stimulation and a sense of value from the students and the school environment. I find that good and close collaboration with artists, teachers and students is essential and makes the artist-in-residence programme successful.

* *There are more than 900 primary schools and 468 secondary schools for students with no physical or mental handicap. These schools are referred to as "ordinary schools" in the study, as opposed to "special schools" where students with handicap are educated.*

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